

SECTION 1 - PROJECT OVERVIEW

A) Project Purpose

This redevelopment plan for an area along the Concord River in the Lower Belvidere Neighborhood was initiated by the city of Lowell through the joint efforts of the Office of the City Manager and the Division of Planning and Development. The purpose of this project is to prepare a model plan for riverfront redevelopment with zoning and design guidelines that can be applied to help stimulate redevelopment at this site, as well as be applied to similar sites throughout the city. One principal goal of this smart growth model is to develop a set of guidelines to foster redevelopment that promotes neighborhoods where people live, work and play, and is referred to as “New Urbanism.” Another prime goal is to develop zoning and design guidelines to take advantage of the riverfront amenity within this smart growth approach.

The city of Lowell, winner of numerous “All-America City” awards, has a rich industrial and architectural history that has earned it a designation as one of America’s National Parks. This New Urbanism approach, called the Concord River Neighborhood Plan, builds upon this reputation by capitalizing on the Concord Riverfront as an amenity to stimulate revitalization in the Lower Belvidere area. In addition, this plan builds upon a revitalization plan, completed by TerraSphere in 2002, just north of this study area at the confluence of the Concord and Merrimack Rivers. That revitalization plan recommended a new complex of buildings incorporating a state courthouse, performing arts center and office development between East Merrimack, Fayette and Andover Streets with the Concord River bounding the west side. This New Urbanism plan extends the redevelopment efforts of the previous plan to include the integration of various uses, such as residential, neighborhood commercial/retail, light industrial and an extensive open space/trail system south along the Concord River.

Numerous redevelopment challenges exist within the Project Area due to its current zoning classification, degraded site conditions and complex current ownership. For example, the entire Project Area is currently zoned to promote light manufacturing uses along with warehousing





View south on Perry Street

and storage. This study includes an assessment of the current zoning and recommends new zoning language to encompass the goals of mixed-use redevelopment that will introduce residential into this area along with retail, commercial and light industrial uses.

In addition, the Concord River, which runs along the site's western boundary, is an amenity that the city would like to highlight in this and other redevelopment plans. Unfortunately, access to the water is limited because of the steep slopes and the current use of the abutting property. Creating safe access down to the river's edge would require extensive ramp structures and would be environmentally degrading, visually dominant and cost prohibitive. However, any redevelopment plan for this site should provide the public with visual access to the river from the top of the slope, as well as limited access at other locations where grades permit.

Other issues include overcrowding in the residential areas of the neighborhood, small lot sizes, limited off-street and on-street parking and a lack of public amenities and open space. Redevelopment guidelines must address these issues.



View north up Concord River from Rogers Street



B) General Location

The city of Lowell is located approximately 28 miles northwest of Boston along the Merrimack River. The City has excellent highway access from Routes 3, 93, and 495. The proposed Concord Riverfront area, located on the eastern edge of the Lowell Central Business District, is located within five minutes of these major routes, providing easy access to the surrounding area as well as to downtown Lowell. (see Context Diagram)

The Project Area is approximately 15.3 acres in size and is bordered by the Concord River on the west, Andover Street to the north, Perry Street to the east and Rogers Street on the southern boundary. The site currently includes a variety of uses, with a predominance of vacant land. Uses include an electricity supplier, a light industrial business, warehouse/storage, small commercial/retail businesses, automobile storage and places of worship. Surrounding uses include light industrial manufacturing, small commercial/retail enterprises, places of worship and multi-story residential units housing single to multi-family tenants.

C) Project Objectives

Through the creation of a redevelopment plan for this area, the city of Lowell hopes to achieve a variety of objectives. First, the Concord River Neighborhood Plan will provide a realistic redevelopment framework for transforming this area into a productive mixed-use district, providing opportunities for a variety of affordable housing options, open space protection and enhancement, economic development and job creation. Design guidelines and zoning language will be developed to support this proposed redevelopment plan. These guidelines and zoning recommendations will be developed to easily translate to other locations within the city that possess similar characteristics and redevelopment potential.

